# Sociology - Estonia

Titma, Mikk

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Sammelwerksbeitrag / collection article

*Mikk Titma*

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*Discussant: Mikko Lagerspetz*

## 1. Analysis of the pre-1989 situation

Sociological studies in Estonia started in 1960 at the same time as in Leningrad and Moscow during what was called the "Khrushchev thaw" (Keen and Mucha, 1994). Estonia was more opened to the West, and Western ideas penetrated more easily than in the rest of the Soviet Union. Estonia also had a relatively open ideological atmosphere and its authorities were more tolerant than those in other places in the Soviet Union. Kaariku seminars organized by Ülo Vooglaid turned out to be major discussion places for leading Soviet sociologists like Juri Levada, Vladimir Yadov, Igor Kon, and others. Those seminars very effectively spread sociological paradigms in Soviet social science.

The Laboratory of Sociology at Tartu University, founded by Vooglaid in 1967, played a leading role in the development process of Estonian sociology. It developed the school of mass communication research that is still one of the foremost directions of sociological research. In its heyday, the Laboratory had more than 20 permanent staff members and was closely linked with the Leningrad school (Yadov) of sociology. Its empirical basis of research was initially the local newspaper "Edasi" and later Estonian Radio and Television. Beginning in 1970, Estonian Radio collected audience information four times a year. Regular data collection about the audience allowed Estonian Radio to establish the first electronic database in the USSR in the 1960s and an all-Estonian network of interviewers. In addition to regular data collection, a quite sophisticated methodology of content analysis was used.

The Laboratory of Sociology also played a prominent role in Estonian public opinion in re-establishing national consciousness, which brought its activities in conflict with the Communist Party leadership. As a result, the Laboratory was forced to close down in 1975. This diminished the organizational capacities of the Vooglaid school, but this school now plays one of the leading scientific roles in Estonia; Lauristin and Vihalemm are the most prominent mass communication analysts.

Youth studies in Tartu University began in the mid-1960s and were developed by Titma. He took ideas and a questionnaire from Morris Rosenberg's study of high school graduates and started his own longitudinal study of secondary school graduates in 1966 with 2260 respondents (50% of that year's graduates). Follow-ups were carried out in 1969, 1973, 1979, and 1991 (Titma, Silver, and Anderson, 1996). The last follow-up was conducted with US NSF grants and also included children of the original respondents and native speakers of Russian. This project still has good potential, since the respondents are of retirement age and can provide good data about the older cohort's ability to cope with the radical change in the macrosocial environment, from a Soviet party-state to the Estonian market-based democracy. In 1982, a new longitudinal project was developed on the basis of this one.

Titma started the new project "Paths of a Generation" (Titma and Tuma, 1995) as an informal college with intensive training and help for researchers from different parts of the USSR. The first stage of fieldwork was carried out in 15 regions of the Soviet Union and encompassed 45,000 respondents. The basic finding of the first wave was that structural aspects of life, starting with the school system, were radically different in different regions of the Soviet Union and demanded different policy. The first follow-up was conducted from 1987-1989 (Titma, 1989). It focused on the age cohort's entrance to adult life. The second follow-up was conducted in 1992-1993 and included Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, 3 Kazakhstan regions, Moldavia, 4 Russian regions, 6

Ukrainian regions, and Tajikistan. For the first time, it was centrally financed by the Jacobs Foundation, and the quality of the data collection radically improved. This follow-up focused on the differentiation of young adults' life careers in the first years of independence of post-Soviet countries. The third follow-up was conducted in 1997-1998 with a US NSF grant and focused on the age cohort's use of opening opportunities in the transitional society.

Sociological research groups worked in various institutions and gradually developed the skills to collect various kinds of data. The formation of the Baltic branch of the Soviet Sociological Association gave a strong boost to research. Since 1978, Baltic sociologists have attended meetings of the International Sociological Association and have prepared English-language publications for it (Sociological Research in the Baltic 1982; 1986). Joint research projects covering the Baltic region were also developed. Most important was the comparative "student study" in 1977/1978, in which Estonia and Lithuania were part of an international study with Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union (Adamski and Titma, 1985). Finnish and Estonian teams conducted several comparative studies on families and deviant behavior (Haavio-Mannila and Rannik 1985; Narusk 1992). The same group developed studies of culture in 1966 with a five-year interval.

At the same time, most researchers avoided practical research, because sooner or later it caused political trouble. Basically, for those who understood it, the data spoke for itself. Until the second half of 1980s, any direct conclusion that would have questioned the status quo was politically dangerous.

The main institutions providing opportunities for sociological research were the Academy of Science (Rannik), Tartu University (Lauristin, Tiit, Titma), Estonian Radio, and Tallinn Polytechnic Institute (Pavelson). All this research activity produced and descriptively analyzed relatively good quality data. The primary cause of methodological weakness was the lack of university education in sociology. Analyses were done on mainframe computers, so Estonian sociology was up-to-date in the framework of Soviet conditions. But when personal computers arrived at the end of the 1980s elsewhere, Estonian sociologists faced a lack of resources and lost ground in comparison to other centers in Eastern Europe.

## 2. Redefinition of the discipline since 1990

Since 1990, sociological research was strongly influenced by political changes. First, the re-establishment of Estonian independence redefined the object. Instead of examining social processes in Estonia in the context of the Soviet Union, sociologists' research object was a small country. Many social phenomena were presented quite individually in the context of a small society. First, socio-economic processes started to depend on a limited number of social actors and the stochastic base of processes diminished radically. In a small society, the role of the elite became especially evident. A small number of people managed to use shock therapy successfully, turning the command economy into a market economy. The inevitable loss of heavy industry and jobs as a result of separation from the Soviet Union was compensated by effective use of Estonian transit capacities. In 1993, Estonia temporarily took sixth place in the world in the export of non-ferrous metals – without mining them. Estonia was also one of the main transit corridors through which Russia imported goods from the West. These favorable conditions of robber capitalism lasted some years and allowed the Estonian economy to grow from 1994 on. With the re-orientation of the economy, people's whole outlook changed and the labor market emerged with strong entrepreneurial bases, weak labor organization, and correspondingly cheap labor. Funding for science and education was cut dramatically.

This individualistic market-oriented spirit directly influenced a small community of sociologists (60 researchers). Previously, the state had provided stable positions and resources for scientific research; now, transitional conditions demanded entrepreneurial activity from most sociologists. For sociologists, the first marketization opened opportunities for market research.

Two major market research companies emerged. *AS EMOR* (http://www.emor.ee/eng/) established itself successfully as the dominant market researcher in Estonia. With its own interviewer network and 30 researchers, it is a major institution carrying out data collection and preliminary analyses of data. It is networked with the European Gallup system and works with the major US market researcher, Nielsen-Anderson. As a private company, it does not make public the data it collects and conducts limited scientific analyses.

The second company, *SAAR Poll* (http://www.saarpoll.ee/English.htm), is many times smaller; many researchers use it as an institution providing data-collecting service. It is much more oriented toward public opinion and election studies. Alternative political parties usually use EMOR and SAAR Poll in election studies. A major part of the budget comes from public opinion and political polling. SAAR Poll is linked with EuroBarometer and other international surveys. The third competitor in public opinion and market research is *ES Turu-uuringute AS* (ES Market Research) (http://www.turu-uuringute.ee). It is developing rapidly and shares 2nd and 3rd place in the polling market. One-third of its turnover comes from abroad and one-fifth from the public sector.

In 1990, most sociologists worked in universities or the Academy of Science and were confronted with a sharp decline in their salaries and a complete lack of resources for research. In this situation, their survival depended on two alternative activities. The first and definitely wealthier sources of funds were all kinds of foreign grants and research opportunities. Since the Baltic countries are small and easily accessible with relatively normal data-collection abilities, many international projects like the World Value study and all kinds of nationality studies collected data in Estonia. Scandinavian researchers in particular collected massive amounts of data. Collaborative work with Western sociologists hugely improved the qualification of Estonian sociologists. This work mainly had to do with data collection and the sociological understanding and interpretation of data. This interest in Estonia as a field for studying transitional society is diminishing. More lasting is interest in ethnic relations and Estonia as a reference for Scandinavian researchers. As in most post-Communist countries, Soros and some other international institutions supported sociologists and helped them survive the first years after the collapse of Communism.

The main avenue for survival was the private organization of education. Privately organized university-level education and vocational training developed rapidly and enlarged to previously unimaginable proportions. Estonia, a country with 10,000 secondary school graduates annually, had at one point almost 40 universities. These institutions recruited substantially more students annually than there were secondary school graduates. This not only provided survival to sociologists, it also forced them to learn about Western sources to keep audiences satisfied with the knowledge offered them.

After some years, Estonia started to intensively orient itself toward integration in the European Union; this substantially increased the demand for good data about the state of affairs in many socio-economic processes. For social scientists, it provided the opportunity to participate in the development of official statistics. It is natural that the leading role in this development was in the hands of the Statistical Office of Estonia. Estonian statistics started to correspond to EU statistics and their quality increased substantially. The Statistical Office of Estonia has good population statistics and a register of the population whose quality corresponds to that of the Scandinavian countries. The Statistical Office of Estonia also provides services in data collection. It participates in Eurostat surveys and carries out its own regular surveys of income, the labor force, households, etc. In 2000, it carried out the first census after the re-establishment of Estonian independence. All this provides good and broad opportunities for empirically oriented research on Estonian society.

Today, the major *institutional bases* of sociology are three: universities, market research/polling firms, and state organs.

Universities are the first type. In 1989, sociology began to be taught in Tartu University. Now, most professionally working sociologists are graduates of this university. 15 bachelors and 5 masters graduate annually from Tartu University. Teaching is oriented toward quantitative

sociology and is relatively strong in methodology. A major development in methodology is Estonian sociologists' ability to use causal analyses. At Tartu University, Liina Tooding teaches up-to-date methods for causal analyses, and students graduating from the department are able to carry out data analyses using these methods. This provides opportunities to test verifiable hypotheses on the methodological level that is now standard among the world's sociological community.

Tallinn Pedagogical University started to train sociologists later and recently graduated its first class of bachelors. Teaching is more oriented toward the practical use of sociological skills. The Institute of International Studies and Social Science (RASI) developed from the Academy of Science. It barely survived initial difficulties. Now it is merged with Tallinn Pedagogic University and is one of Estonia's serious sociological research centers.

Tallinn Technical University also teaches sociology, but not as a major. Some private universities also provide courses in sociology. The most prominent among them is the Estonian Institute of Humanities, which accepts half a dozen students yearly. Estonia has limited opportunities for sociologists, especially at universities, and in the near future only one or two universities will be able to provide sociology as a major.

In 1993, a team of sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, and human geographers from Tartu University formed an initiative group to create a social sciences databank and began to work out a strategy for saving and using the research materials collected by Estonian social scientists in previous decades. The databank was officially formed as an interdisciplinary center of the Faculty of Social Sciences in early 1996, and it began to function as a national social science databank – the Estonian Social Science Data Archives (ESSDA). In 1997, ESSDA became a full member of the Council of European Social Science Data Archives – CESSDA. It was certainly a significant institutional development owing much to the personal efforts of ESSDA managing director Murakas.

ESSDA's data collection consists of the materials of more than 200 Estonian empirical social studies carried out between 1971 and 2000 and covering research areas like opinion polls, youth and media studies, entrepreneurship, rural sociology, and many more. More representative studies include the Estonian Longitudinal Survey 1966-1991 and "Paths of a Generation: A comparative longitudinal study of a cohort from 1983-1998 in 7 successor states of the USSR", the Estonian Youth Survey 1996-98 (samples of all Estonian counties), and EMOR's surveys of political attitudes.

Estonian academic institutions and policymakers increasingly use ESSDA materials. Assistance from the German data organization GESIS enabled ESSDA to translate a number of descriptive materials from significant studies into English. With the help of the Open Estonia Foundation, ESSDA began to compile the first Estonian social science electronic journal "*Estonian Social Science Online"*. Due to the chronic lack of finances in 1999 and 2000, ESSDA could only continue the description, systematization, and cataloguing of studies. The second issue of the electronic journal "*Estonian Social Science Online"* has also come out. ESSDA's Internet page has been steadily improved and supplemented.[1]

The second institutional basis of sociology is market research and polling firms, as mentioned above. 2-3 market research and polling firms seems to be the limit for Estonian institutional development in this direction. Competition for resources between these firms and universities may even reduce the number of both types of institutions.

The third institutional basis for Estonian sociology is the state. Many state organizations need sociological expertise and are starting to organize their own databases and research units. The Statistical Office of Estonia initiated the first development in this direction. It has now analytic units and its own competent set of interviewers covering the country as a whole. The Ministry of Education has a developing databank identifying individual students and tracking their educational paths. The Ministry of Social Affairs is also developing research units. Other state organs are providing resources for surveys needed for work.

## 3. Core theoretical and methodological orientations

Before 1990, Estonian sociology was clearly empirically oriented, and this tradition survives. However, as the object of research changed, there was a remarkable shift in *quantitative and qualitative methodology*. Estonian society is small and needs to study only a relatively small number of cases to detect social processes or trends. This is even truer about the macro and micro levels of social life, which sustain the social fabric. Social engineering needs access to the mechanics of development, and in a small society they are very concrete and often visible without massive data. This requires good qualitative studies.

On the other hand, the Estonian sociological community is small and still covers the whole area of sociological knowledge. This means that few people are really knowledgeable about their colleagues' work. As a whole, the sociological community is a professionally weak reference group for any specific scholar. Even worse, Estonia has no sociological journal. There is a journal, "Trames", covering social science as a whole. This means that a sociologist expresses his work to society through public articles in newspapers or general journals. This is a way to introduce the scholar to wider reference groups in society.

Public demand for sociological knowledge, as mentioned above, is very concrete and ignores purely scientific long-term effort. State and private institutions provide resources for pragmatic tasks. This is an additional factor motivating sociologists to use small samples and to interpret them with "soft", sometimes anthropological methods. This work is not always very professional or truly qualitative. Lagerspetz, in particular, has a good international reputation with his qualitative sociology (1993; 1998; 2001). The Lauristin and Vihalemm school uses the qualitative approach massively in media analyses (Hoyer, Lauk, and Vihalemm, 1993; Vihalemm 2001; 2001).

The qualitative approach allows the satisfaction of the needs of a small society, where the role of stochastic macro-processes does not have to be traced empirically and the need for very specific knowledge about micro-processes is much more important. Knowledge about macro-processes is basically transferred to the Estonian context as a general product of world or, more specifically, European social science. This trend is presented very widely, and works by Becker, Coleman, Giddens, Goldthorpe, Offe, Habermas, Berger, Luckmann, and others are used in teaching. Like the Scandinavian countries, Estonia uses English as a lingua franca. The penetration of these general approaches hugely increased the social understanding of society. Theories like human, social, and cultural capital; social interaction; social network; action theory; and others are common frameworks used in the presentation of sociological analyses.

The quantitative approach is presented through international projects and, in the few instances where the state provides enough resources, by taking representative samples for sociological analyses. One area that the Estonian state funds well is the study of interethnic relations. The VERA project "Integration of Non-Estonian Youth in Estonian Society" provided massive resources for 4 years. Under the leadership of Heidmets, Jarve, and Lauristin, many sociologists worked to produce two books in Estonian: Russian Youth in Estonia (Avita, 1997) and Multicultural Estonia (Tartu, 1998).

The Statistics Committee has carried out a representative survey of the labor force, households, and income. International projects using the quantitative approach incorporate Estonian researchers on various levels, depending on their skills. Most common is cooperation in which Estonian researchers are in charge of data collection in Estonia and participate in some common publication. Estonian sociologists are rarely PAs or co-PAs in an international project.

Estonian sociologists increasingly take the international sociological community as a reference point. When electing professors or lecturers, Tartu University demands publications in professional sociological journals and uses citation indices as the criteria for judgment about a scholar's professional level. This helps to raise the professional level of the Estonian sociological community. Better opportunities to study abroad allow younger sociologists to become engaged in

the international sociological community already at the beginning of their scholarly careers and to gain skills needed for publication in the world's leading sociological journals.

## 4. Thematic orientation and funding

After Estonia gained independence, Estonian sociology's thematic orientation changed mainly to fit the practical needs of society. During Soviet times, the function of the officially accepted social science was ideological: it served the propagandistic justification of the ideological line and policy the party followed at a particular time. Social engineering was unimaginable under the declining Brezhnev regime, in which loyalty in the chain of command was the supreme principle. It may sound strange, but a scholar had a lot of freedom to do research, as long as he did not challenge existing policy or the people executing it. Resources for science were given through the bureaucratic chain without actually checking the results. This situation changed dramatically after 1990.

First, resources became available to study new phenomena that had to be developed in Estonian society. The *Estonian transition* to a market-based democracy was the broadest theme for researchers. In the first couple of years, market research had more resources than all other sociological research. Next, sociological research expanded to cover elections and party politics. At first, resources came mainly from abroad, but now the government and political actors provide resources to study the political process. Both the market and democracy needed to be established as major phenomena. So popular opinion had to be surveyed.

There was a need to construct a general picture of the transitional process and to investigate certain processes happening in it. Lauristin and Vihalemm, with Rosengren and Weibull, wrote the influential monograph, "Return to the Western World: Cultural and Political Perspectives on Estonian Post-Communist Transition". Using a number of theoretical approaches, they presented a picture of the transitional process in Estonian society. The monograph in English that described the 40-year-old age cohort's entrance to the Estonian nation-state in 1991 raised a specter of problems emerging in the process of the re-establishment of independence and the transition to the market economy (Titma, Silver and Anderson, 1996). Lagerspetz raised problems of social construction in the transition process (Lagerspetz, 1998; 2001). Eamets (1994), Varblane (1999) and Terk (2000) studied economic aspects of the transition.

Discussion of the transition process continues as Estonian society is heavily politicized between small elite groups that are fighting for control of the state to benefit from power. The population is considerably alienated from the political process. The political elite has monopolized the decision-making process, ignoring even the scientific community, entrepreneurs, the media, and the local elite.

In the second stage of the transition process, Estonian society needed empirical knowledge and scenarios to solve concrete social problems. The most acute of these was the problem of *interethnic relations* in the re-established nation state. The resources to study this process came at first from the European Union. Some leading scholars abroad – David Laitin, Michael Kennedy, Anderson, Silver and others – used grants to investigate ethnic relations in Estonia, which was the only post-Soviet country where blood was not spilled during the complicated departure from the Soviet Empire. It is also the smallest Baltic country, so it is relatively easy to take a representative sample of it. Kennedy, Helemae, and Voormann have conducted comparative analyses of Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

Kirch published on the changes in ethnic relations between Estonians and Russian-speakers (Kirch and Geistlinger, 1995; Kirch and Kirch, 1995; Kirch, Kirch, and Ott, 1996).

Klara Hallik and Vihalemm studied cultural aspects of ethnicity problems (1999). Aarelaid–Tart looked more broadly at Estonians' cultural roots (2000; Aarelaid, Johnston Hank 2000; Aarelaid-Tart and Tart, 1995). Kulu covered migration (1998; 2000; 2000).

In Estonian sociology, media research has strong traditions going back to the school of Lauristin and Vihalemm. Now the center of these studies is the Department of Journalism and Communication at Tartu University. The tradition begun in 1960 is followed, and mostly content analyses are used to analyze the role of the media in transitional society (Lauristin, 1998; Vihalemm, 2001). The project "Development of the Baltic countries" is building up comparative media analyses in the Baltic countries. The most important project was "BALTICOM: Changing Values and Orientations in Baltic Sea Countries"; the results are presented in a monograph (Lauristin et al., 1997).

Social stratification attracted considerable interest from Estonian sociologists in the 1970s (Yanovitch and Fisher, 1976), but deeper analyses of stratification processes did not become realistic until after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Soviet authorities regarded this topic as politically highly sensitive, and it was impossible to go beyond rough data. Titma and Tuma (1993) carried out a theoretical analysis of the specificity of stratification in the former Soviet state, where deeper stratification existed between institutions, rather than between individuals.

After 1990, Estonian society went through a rapid social differentiation process, and social inequality deepened considerably. The deepest inequality emerged on the ascriptive lines of age and gender. Voormann (1996) and Narusk (1996) studied gender inequality. Age differentiation was not addressed directly, but the frame of the longitudinal study "Paths of a Generation" (Titma, Tuma, and Silver, 1998; Tuma, Titma and Murakas, 2001) examined young adults' advantages and factors facilitating them in the early 1990s.

The transitional process hit old and middle-aged people the most severely. International agencies were again the first to provide resources to study poverty. NORBALT 1 and 2: "Living Conditions in Baltic countries 1993-2001" gave a group headed by Kutsar the opportunity to look into the differentiation of living conditions and the increasing poverty in Estonia (Kutsar, 1993, 1995, 1997). Now this research has deepened in the framework of the project IPROSEC: "Improving Policy Responses and Outcomes to Socio-Economic Challenges: changing family structures, policy and practice".

Much more discussed are social mobility and the social stratification emerging on the lines of classical social cleavages. Social stratification is the main research topic at the Department of Sociology at Tartu University and at the Institute of International and Social Studies at Tallinn Pedagogic University (Saar and Helemae, 1995; 1997). Conceptually, the stratification approach followed by Titma (strata approach) argues that a society as small and service-based as Estonia is unlikely to create class cleavages and corresponding division of society. Saar and Voormann argue that the major part of society is below the poverty line and that social inequality is so deep that there is real chance that class structure will emerge in society. Both teams are trying to test corresponding claims empirically. Publications are basically on social mobility as a classic topic, but the labor force survey permits a view of social status from multiple angles.

Youth studies have a long tradition in Estonia, starting with longitudinal studies in 1966, when secondary school graduates were surveyed. More recently, Saarniit headed youth research with many samples of university students (1990) and school students (1992; 1996-1998). This research was one of the foundations for an international book (Helve et al., 2000) comparing Estonians with their Finnish, German, Italian, and Swedish peers. Closely tied to youth studies, research on the sociology of education is also carried out. Saar is a leading education researcher with publications in the "European Sociological Review" (Titma and Saar, 1995; Saar, 1997). She uses multinomial analyses to study the predictors of educational achievement.

Since 1970, the family has been a focus of sociological analysis. Ene Tiit formed a research group at Tartu University, and now Kutsar is following the tradition. Separately, in cooperation with Finnish colleagues, family research was done in Tallinn and is now concentrated at the Institute of International and Social Studies under the leadership of Hansson (1995; Narusk and Hansson, 1996; 1999) and Kelam (Haavio-Mannila and Kelam, 1996). Blom, Narusk, and Hansson, co-PIs of "Social Changes in the Baltic and Nordic Countries" from 1994-1998, headed

the most significant project. Life course analyses based on longitudinal studies are being developed at Tartu University (Titma, 1997; 1999, 2001). The data set of "Paths of a Generation" provides a unique opportunity to examine how the age cohort, studied before graduation from three major types of secondary schools in 1983 and surveyed again in 1987, 1993, and 1998, is taking advantage of new opportunities in Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Moldavia, Russia, Ukraine, and Tajikistan.

Younger scholars have made many individual efforts in other areas. Some of them may enter the international arena in the near future. A lot of publications have appeared locally, but since they are inaccessible to the international audience, they are not included in this overview.

## 5. Public space and academic debates

Estonian sociologists are quite successful in developing public space for their research results. Two main dailies use a lot of sociological data, and one daily's special supplement, "Luup", concentrates on statistical and other data to address social problems. Sociologists initiated a public debate on social inequality and poverty in Estonia. The Prime Minister and members of parliament met with social scientists and discussed the problem. Sociologists pointed out that two aspects must be distinguished: the low standard of living and the strength of the social safety net for people who fall below the poverty line. It took some time to explain to society that some individuals fail because of personal deficiencies. Yet, if the number of unemployed people is over 10% and almost one-third of population is below the poverty line, there must be something wrong with the society, not with citizens.

Another big discussion concentrated on generations and their ability to be successful under the conditions of transition. It focused on the success story of the young adults' age cohort. As winners of the transition period, most of them succeeded, but around one-fifth were still losers. Problems of older age cohorts were discussed quite superficially, because data about them is limited. No one is really providing resources to study the elderly.

Problems of the elite are constantly discussed. At first, the focus was on the tension between the old nomenclature elite versus the dissidents and new younger politicians. But the Communist Party in Estonia was dissolved in 1990 and did not play any role in the re-established nation state, so the issue became irrelevant. Dissident ministers turned out to be unsuccessful managers or politicians and lost influence quickly. The emerging political elite was able to concentrate power and eliminate other elite groups from political decision-making. A situation unimaginable in Western European countries emerged when almost all academicians wrote an open letter to the government about the privatization of power plants; but the letter was ignored. The media have limited influence on the political process and the government often ignores Estonian entrepreneurs, as well. The population's alienation from the political process is a normal response to this kind of development. Social scientists are raising the problem of the government's capacity to govern effectively on very narrow ground (the political elite), but with limited success.

Public debate on ethnic relations was very intense in the early 1990s, but died down by 2000. The reason is that the political process has been normalized as Russian politicians are integrated in it. The Russian-speaking community is building up a functioning ethnic economy. It is still hurt by the citizenship issue, but for most Russian-speakers, this is not a very acute problem, since unemployment has not risen beyond the community's capacity to absorb it.

The only significant academic debate among sociologists touched the social stratification issue. Deep social inequality led to discussion of the possibility that class society would be re-established. At first, the issue discussed was whether there was one or many schemas of stratification. Lauristin argued against using the terminology of class society, pointing out that the use of certain terminology might itself lead to a certain approach to social stratification. Later it was empirically shown that different stratification schemas have to be used with different tasks.

A second issue was how plausible the emergence of a class society is. The Estonian economy and employment structure provides little space for the emergence of the working class as a social actor. Industry is represented with half a dozen plants with over 1000 employees. The private sector – the dominant employer – typically consists of small and some medium-sized companies with fewer than 100 employees. The organization of workers as a class seems rather unlikely with such small work units. Labor unions are organized on the basis of occupations, not industries, and no party in parliament is trying to be a working class party.

## 6. Views on further development

The further development of Estonian sociology is likely to be strongly influenced by EU membership. First, this will mean broader collection of social information. European Union institutions have yearly-upgraded databases and databanks. Estonian sociologists will be able to engage in corresponding activity in their own country. In addition to EU institutions, Western Europe has many unified private or university-based efforts to incorporate new members covering their home countries. This will provide Estonian sociologists with more data for analyses, but resources can become the bottleneck. A country as small and poor as Estonia has limits to this kind of activities.

International cooperation will probably deepen on the basis of individual researchers' activity. This is the way young people are now looking for opportunities to get good sociological training abroad. Of course, some of them are staying abroad, but as salaries and living standards rise, a number of well-trained sociologists will come back to Estonia. The sociological community is small, so competition between homegrown and Western-trained sociologists will end in favor of the latter. This will improve the professionalism of social research.

One major development might be in the direction of products. Better scientific skills will enable Estonian sociologists to compete at publishing articles in leading sociological journals in Europe. Improving the command of English and German will make this easier. Better qualifications will also improve the teaching of sociological approaches needed for analyses of sociological phenomena. Today, this is Estonian sociology's weakest point. The teaching of sociologists at the university level has clear limits in Estonia, but training other professionals who need to analyze social data is a much broader task. A broader function for sociologists in a small society is to improve the public services' and other influential social actors' understanding of the deeper complexity of Estonian society's social fabric.

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[1] ESSDA's address: Room 217/218, 78 Tiigi Street, 50410 Tartu, Estonia. Phone: +372-7-375 931, fax: + 372-7-375 900, E-mail: socarch@psych.ut.ee WWW homepage: http://psych.ut.ee/esta/

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